

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 005043

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM MEETS IRAQI

MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND SUNNI SHEIKHS

Classified By: Acting Counselor for Political-Military Affairs Evan G.
Read for reason 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) (SUMMARY) Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT), called on Iraqi Minister of Defense Saadoun Dulime during a visit to Baghdad on December 6. Present at the meeting were a group of 17 Sunni sheikhs from the Al Anbar Province. This presented an opportunity for Ambassador Crumpton to hear first hand the complaints and concerns the sheikhs have about the situation in their province. The major complaints dealt with election issues, detainees, Coalition Force (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) tactics, and the perceived marginalization of the sheikhs. The sheikhs, who are not happy with the Governor of the province because they believe he is an outsider imposed on them by the USG, proposed they be given responsibility for the conduct of "innocent" detainees, that they be allowed to help in the election process, that CF and ISF operations should be conducted based on specific information, and that their dignity be respected by CF and ISF. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) When Ambassador Crumpton arrived at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) for a scheduled meeting with Dulime, the MinDef was still meeting with a group of Sunni sheikhs from the Al Anbar province who he had called to Baghdad to discuss the situation in the province and to hear their complaints and proposed solutions. Dulime's intent is to bring the sheikhs into the political process and is part of the Mission's Sunni outreach initiative. He invited Ambassador Crumpton to join the meeting in order to meet the sheikhs and to hear, first hand, of their concerns. Prior to introducing Ambassador Crumpton, Dulime explained to him that three major themes had already been discussed with the sheikhs.

-- First, with regard to the elections, the sheikhs were upset because the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) is bringing in poll workers who are from out of the area and who are not Sunni. The sheikhs complain that this intimidates the local voters and also represents a conflict of interest. Dulime has proposed a compromise, under which the tribes will be permitted to assign two of their members at each polling station to act as observers. Dulime hopes that by making the sheikhs more comfortable with the election process, more of them will urge their people to participate.

-- Second, the sheikhs asked Dulime why their region has become a battlefield. They believe the military operations are intended to stifle Sunni political participation. He replied to them that the purpose of CF and ISF operations is, on the contrary, to set the stage for increased participation by ridding the area of terrorists who would see the democratic process fail by intimidating voters and election workers.

-- Third, the sheikhs are concerned that Anbar has become an incubator for terrorism, fed by foreign fighters who come from Syria with material and financial resources and who harm the locals. Dulime assured them the role of the military is to rid the area of these terrorists and called upon the sheikhs to help separate the terrorists from the locals who have been hijacked and convinced to help carry out terrorist attacks. Dulime has proposed that the sheikhs assist by pointing out and turning in foreign terrorists and those who shelter them, and by encouraging their young men to join the security services to help protect their areas from the enemies of Iraq.

DETAINEE ISSUES

13. (SBU) Dulime introduced Ambassador Crumpton to the sheikhs and invited them to address their concerns to him. The first to speak, Sheikh Ali, paramount sheikh of the Dulaymi tribe, raised the issue of detainees. He complained that previously there had been an agreement between the sheikhs and the government that if a person would sponsor and vouch for the good conduct of a detainee, the detainee would be released into his custody. The person would then be under the authority of the tribe and could redeem himself and rejoin society. Now, this agreement is no longer in effect.

14. (SBU) Sheikh Ali said that many of those detained are

innocent, but in jail they are recruited by the real insurgents. In addition, this weakens the authority of the sheikhs, as their people see they can do nothing for them. He maintained that the sheikhs know who is guilty and will not vouch for someone who is a criminal or insurgent. And even if a vouched for person does get into trouble, the government can always come back and hold the sheikh accountable. He was also troubled that sometimes he has no idea what has happened to someone in his tribe who has been detained, and this makes him look weak in front of his people. At the very least, CF and ISF should inform the sheikhs where their people are and on what grounds they are being held. Echoing Sheikh Ali's concerns, a sheikh from the Karabila tribe near Al-Qaim complained that CF refused to release female detainee and that this was a grave affront. He reiterated that the sheikhs could be trusted and would only sponsor the innocent.

IMPOSED OFFICIALS

15. (SBU) Sheikh Ali next complained that the governor of the province was a member of a political party from outside the area who was installed and is supported by CF, without consulting the local sheikhs. He only goes between his home and his office, and when he does he is surrounded by humvees and Suburbans. He is never out among the people. The Sheikh asked rhetorically for an explanation of what is truly motivating the CF. "You want security, but you're appointing people who are not supported by us; his security detail includes known terrorists."

16. (SBU) Others echoed Ali's point. One complained that the Coalition claims to bring democracy to the country, but the democracy the sheikhs understand is the freedom to be able to think and do things for themselves. "Reality does not resemble this at all in Al Anbar." He cited two examples. First, nighttime raids on houses, which appear to the sheikhs to be indiscriminate, followed by the arrest of innocent people. He suggested that these raids are based on bad intelligence or misinformation instead of firm information about the location of terrorists. Second, he claimed that outside political parties are allowed to function in the area. These other parties come from Baghdad, are well-funded, and strive to create instability to take advantage of the locals who cannot compete with them. "Al Anbar," he complained, "is treated like a third class province. We don't even receive our food rations on time. All of this creates problems for the people and leads them to mistrust the central government."

LACK OF COMPENSATION

17. (SBU) Another complaint was the slowness or complete lack of compensation payments for people whose homes had been destroyed or damaged. One sheikh stressed the need to make these payments to "innocent" people, whose property was damaged even though they did not harbor or support the terrorists.

LACK OF RESPECT

18. (SBU) An underlying theme throughout the discussion was the belief by the sheikhs that Coalition and Iraqi Government actions had disrespected them and caused them to be diminished in front of their own people. They are ashamed because they cannot gain the release of their tribesmen. They look weak because they do not govern their own areas while "outsiders" do. Their people are suffering economically and there is nothing they can do to help them. They complained that although most of them are targets of well armed terrorists, they are not permitted to carry their own guns. They are treated with disrespect in front of their people by Coalition and ISF soldiers at roadblocks. And they are not able to defend themselves or their people from the terrorists because they are not allowed to be armed. Because their people can not fight the terrorists, they are forced to join them or suffer the consequences.

MINISTER OF DEFENSE URGES COOPERATION

19. (SBU) Dulime invited all the participants to join him for lunch, where the discussion continued. He responded to the complaints raised by the sheikhs by stating it is not enough for them to endlessly recite their problems. Rather, they need to take action to become part of the solution. First, he asked them to provide him with the names of 308 of their members who could act as polling site observers on election day. This will allow the tribes to observe and participate

in the electoral process to assure themselves that it is transparent. It will also help to assure their people are not intimidated when they come to vote. Second, do not let foreigners and terrorists into their towns and villages. They are a communicable disease that will spread and cause more violence and destruction. Third, the sheikhs complain that raids are conducted on bad intelligence against the homes of innocents. If that is the case, then help the ISF to arrest the real terrorists and outsiders by identifying them to the army. They know who belongs in their villages; point out those who do not. Failure to help CF and ISF take action against the terrorists makes it seem as if they support the terrorists. Finally, the sheikhs constantly complain that the ISF deployed in their province are composed of "aliens" and "outsiders." The answer to this is to urge their young men to join the ISF so that it will become more representative.

10. (SBU) Ambassador Crumpton thanked Dulime and the sheikhs for the unique opportunity to meet with them and to hear their concerns. He reaffirmed that the U.S. supports them and the people of Iraq in their struggle against terrorism and said that our success depends upon the strength of our partnerships, which must be based upon a firm foundation of trust and understanding. Ambassador Crumpton noted that the U.S. will use its power to defend U.S. interests and U.S. citizens, and we need the sheikhs' help, to calibrate this power, to exercise precision, to defeat those foreign fighters who have established themselves in Al Anbar province.
KHALILZAD